# ON THE ART OF LIVING TOGETHER

R·F·HORTON

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ON

# THE ART OF LIVING TOGETHER

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OF

# LIVING TOGETHER

BY

ROBERT F. HORTON, M.A. D.D.

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# I

## LIVING TOGETHER IN THE FAMILY

IT has sometimes struck me as very singular that while nothing is so common, and nothing is so difficult, as living with other people, we are seldom instructed in our youth how to do it well. Our knowledge of the subject is acquired by experience, chiefly by our failures. And by the time that we have tolerably mastered the delicate art we are on the point of being called to the isolation of the grave, — or shall I say to the vast company of the Majority.

But an art of so much practical moment deserves a little more consideration. It should not be taught

by chance, or in fragments, but duly deployed, expounded, and enforced. It is of far more pressing importance, for example, than the art of playing the piano or the violin, and is quite as difficult to learn. I would even venture to say that it is of more vital value than the indispensable art of arithmetic. If we were adepts in this art many of the catastrophes of life would be averted; and if even we had some smattering of its lore we should greatly change the interiors of our homes, and contribute to the progress of society and the world.

It is written, "It is not good for man to be alone;" but, on the other hand, it is often far from good to be with him. A docile cat is preferable, a mongoose, or even a canary. Indeed, for want of proper instruction a large number of the human race, as they are known in this damp

and foggy island, are "gey ill to live wi'," and no one would attempt it but for charity and the love of God.

Now is it not remarkable, so far from having an art of living together, we have not even a *word* for it. The Greeks, who were, I suspect, far more advanced in the humanities than we are, of course felt the necessity of such a word. I must not indulge in a quotation from Aristotle's incomparable *Politics*, but it is quite to the point for me to mention the word he uses, even in Greek. To live together is *συζῆν*. To live is *ζῆν*. To live well or nobly is *εὖ ζῆν*. And thus he comes to assert that we men seek *συζῆν* not only for practical help, though of course it is a mutual benefit in proportion as each one gets a share of the *εὖ ζῆν*, but from a deep and essential instinct in us which makes an isolated man

a contradiction in terms. Indeed to live alone argues that one is ἢ θεὸς ἢ θήριον, "either a god" in magnificent self-sufficiency "or a wild beast" in predatory loneliness.

It is the art of συζῆν which is to occupy our attention, though Aristotle was not in possession of the secret which could make it contribute its utmost to the noble life.

If we would handle our subject methodically we must recognise a broad distinction. There are some persons we have to live with involuntarily and others voluntarily. The most important example of the former is the family in which we are born, of the latter the family which we establish by marriage. But the involuntary συζῆν, and also the voluntary συζῆν, admits of certain other divisions which call for particular attention. And we may perhaps

dispose of the subject in this fourfold arrangement.

I. Living together in the family.

II. Living together in circumstances over which we have no control.

III. Living together as husband and wife.

IV. Living together in other conditions according to choice.

I am not sure that I can keep these quite separate. But the division will serve in practice. For if, as I hope, some will glance down these pages and seek for their own required prescription, of course the unmarried will skip the question of living together as husband and wife, which is the one part of the theme adequately treated in books and sermons; while I am particularly anxious to address those readers, not hitherto overmuch considered, who find themselves in

difficulty because the conditions in which they have to live without any choice of their own are arduous and uncongenial.

In this chapter, then, I propose to speak of living together in a family. Nothing is more irreversibly fixed for us than this condition in which we all are bound to make our first experiment in *συζῆν*. For present delight it is convenient that the family be small, for ultimate profit that it be large. If in a large and growing company of brothers and sisters the art has been appreciably mastered there is good hope for the future. And thus, as has been often observed, the best as well as the most agreeable persons are usually those who come from large families, while an only child is a subject for pity, because he misses, as it were, the lower classes in the great school

of society, and often has to start at a disadvantage in the sixth form.

We will assume, then, that we have a large family to deal with, and it devolves on the parents to teach them all how to live together. And the first necessity is that the parents should live with them, and with one another. Parents who cannot throw themselves into the life of their children, and live on that kind of equality in which the only superiority is intrinsic, the superiority of greater knowledge, more settled goodness, and more seasoned love, do not achieve much in the work of training. But success in that noble undertaking seems to come from the graduated companionship of father with son, and mother with daughter, and such intercrossing of son with mother and daughter with father as occasion and taste may dictate.

From this admitted familiarity with the elders comes to the quick mimicry of the child the idea of right intercourse with brothers and sisters. It was the special idea of the Apostle that parents should be polite to their children. Out of such politeness flows the courtesy of children to one another.

Is not the rudeness of children sometimes the mere reflection of the parents' rudeness to them? There should be no rudeness between parents and children on either side. I remember a little scene described to me on an Atlantic liner, by a proud and admiring parent. He had corrected his little boy of eight. The boy had retorted: "Father, you 're a *crank.*" "Well," was the father's witty reply, "if that 's so, you must be a *crank* too, for you 're my son."

But there is nothing in the relation

of father and son, even at the ages of forty and eight, which justifies a rudeness intolerable in other relations.

I never feel so tempted to interfere with mothers — not even when I see them giving their infants beer at the bar of a public-house — as when I hear their uncivil language to their children, that rude and hectoring tone, that volley of coarse epithets and undignified expletives, which of course the children will learn to employ to one another.

*Maxima debetur pueris reverentia.* That is to say, children should be treated with the greatest respect, even by their parents. Strong, or angry, language is not admissible, because it teaches them to use the same. Punishment, which may be necessary, should be calm, self-restrained, and, if one may say so, *polite.* It

should be administered in the spirit in which the Spanish admiral received the sword from Sir Richard Granville. "You are foiled, my child, worsted by the eternal principles of right, and you must surrender and lower arms; but you are only worsted because right is too strong for you, invincibly strong in short, and when you are on right's side you will win."

It will sound almost ridiculous to some English ears, that children in the nursery or the schoolroom should be polite to one another. Let them love one another, it will be said, let them quarrel and make it up; but politeness is a counsel of perfection, unnatural for all boys, and even for some girls; besides it's French. How unhappy it is that our hereditary foes across the Channel are polite. We fear this virtue for our-

selves and our children. And therefore we are often dour to live with. For this is the cardinal virtue of the art of *συζῆν*. I have seen children who undoubtedly loved one another and their parents, would cry in absence for homesickness, and talk very prettily in after-years about *dulce domum;* but there was nothing dulcet in their actual home. It was thought that rudeness was a guarantee of affection; the parents received, "I sha'n't," as a proof of spirit, and taught the children how to rail at one another by effective example. It is home where the heart is, undoubtedly; but it is a happy home only where there is politeness as well.

But even when the law of courtesy has been regnant for the most part in the family it is necessary to make some allowances for the changing

seasons of youth; and a large charity must be applied to the interpretation of conduct. On the other hand, youth in these critical stages of development would do well to remember that for others it is almost as disagreeable as measles, and it is wise therefore to keep out of the way and to avoid provocation.

We are told that when John Stuart Blackie, the brightest and merriest of boys in the home, came to one of these deep passes, and was greatly exercised on religious matters, he fell into a moody and taciturn manner which greatly puzzled the other members of the family. Every growing nature has hard and lonely battles to fight, and while it is dreeing its weird, the less said to it or about it the better. The brightness vanishes from eye and tongue. The elders look at one another inquiringly.

The curt and irritable replies, the sullen and abrupt departures, the desperate resolve not to do what is demanded, puzzle the wisest and try the most patient. Yet young persons in such a frame have to be lived with. To lose patience is to forget our own youth. To be resentful is to break the subtle cords which bind parents to children. To be calm and affectionate, to watch and pray, is the only method, — and that never fails.

On the other hand, Sir Moody, or my lady of that ilk, may suffer admonition. "We are all well content to bear with you; we have ourselves gone much the same way; the deep defiles of life with their impenetrable shadows, and too distant, too invisible stars, are not suitable places for jest and song; we shall forgive you if you retire from our company now

and again; if there are long wrestles in your chamber, and lonely walks across the hills; we shall be prepared for a distant look in your eyes, and a drawn look about the mouth, as of one in a high and rarefied place, breathless and chilled; but remember, a nod of reassurance, a pressure of the hand, a recognition of wistful and inquiring looks will go a long way. Certainly the road has to be trodden alone, but it is not impossible to convey the impression that the solitude is of necessity rather than of choice."

But now I come to the most touching instance of the family συζῆν, the instance where the greatest demands are made, where the victory is most signal, or the defeat most dismal; I mean the case in which the family or some remnant of it has outlasted the usual disintegrations of time,

and from old custom, or inability to change the long routine of the years, a few remain together as it were under the ruins of the ancient roof-tree. Possibly there are a sister and brother surviving; possibly there are two brothers and a sister; possibly there are three sisters. They live together, not so much by choice as for the same reason that the great floors of pozzuolana hang in their perilous ruin unbroken in the baths of Caracalla at Rome. The shattering shocks of time have scattered the rest, but not these. They remain together in middle age or in senility as they were in childhood when the home was still intact.

Here are the occasions for some of the soberest and yet finest chivalries of human life. Out of such situations have been struck prose-idyls which recall the sparkling poems of

youth. And in this kind of living together I have seen so much more to admire than to regret—as the bond, if it becomes unbearable, can for the most part with a wrench be broken—that I shall give myself the pleasure of lingering for a while on this part of my theme. For perhaps the things of which I would now speak would have been oftener imitated if they had been oftener celebrated.

In the *συζῆν* of brother and sister into late life our literature presents us with two notable examples, the one in which the service lay rather with the sister, — though not the recognition; the other in which the love was equal, but the main service was rendered by the brother. First, let me speak of Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy. They lived together until death took the one, and a beautiful example of the art they made

of it. Even when a wife came to join the domestic *συζῆν* in the Lakes the poet could still have repeated what he said at Tintern: —

> For thou art with me here upon the banks
> Of this fair river; thou, my dearest friend,
> My dear, dear friend; and in thy voice I catch
> The language of my former heart, and read
> My former pleasures in the shooting lights
> Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
> May I behold in thee what I was once,
> My dear, dear Sister.

She gave him eyes, she gave him thoughts. And as one turns over her letters it is startling to find how frequently poems, like the one to the daffodils at Esthwaite, were taken in substance from the mind of his beloved sister. It may be thought that the strong man showed but little consideration for the weaker vessel. It is said that her premature decline was due to her exacted labours and long forced marches over the moun-

tains for or with him. But no one who knows what is valuable in human fellowship will admit this charge. To have shut her out from the strenuous workshop of his brain in order to rest her limbs and secure for her the comfort of leisured ease, would have been no kindness. What we prize in living together is not the perpetual concern for our temporal welfare, which seems to place us on a level with domestic cattle, and to insult while it coddles us, but the free admission into the loftiest chamber of the soul, and permission to share whatever great and good transaction is passing there. Dorothy would not, and now will not, listen to these complaints against William. To have *lived with* the poet in the true sense of the word was better than to have lived longer. And it suggests that the kind of cohabitation which

knows little or nothing of spiritual and intellectual intercourse does not merit the term *συζῆν*, or at any rate has nothing to do with *εὖ ζῆν*.

The other example is inexpressibly beautiful: I mean the living together of Charles and Mary Lamb. Elia has contributed to the lasting delight of the human race. But the brother who took his afflicted elder sister to be the cherished companion of his life has contributed even more to the lasting good of his kind. For so nervous and sensitive a spirit it must have been a daily agony to watch lest the dreaded symptoms of mania should return. And though in that heroic and whimsical temper it is hard to think of so unhumorous a thing as fear, one may be sure that, but for love, the flesh would often have shuddered with apprehension lest it should be assailed by the hand

which had already slain a beloved mother. Yet they lived together, a perpetual example of gentle gratitude, of exquisite sympathy, of mutual help. I find an inspiring example here, which, if it were lawful to enlarge our Bible, I would assuredly include in the Canon. When I revolve in my mind what in the nineteenth century is truly Christlike, I immediately remember Charles and Mary Lamb. I marvel at the brutality which could point the finger of scorn at the few weaknesses in a character so strong as the brother's, or could so wound the gentle sister's nature as to print a word which might reflect upon him. "Insuperable proclivity to gin in that same poor Charles!" That was unkindly said by Thomas Carlyle, — Thomas Carlyle, who could not live happily with one of the brightest, cleverest, and

most sociable women of her day, — said of Charles Lamb, who lived in tender and considerate regard with the elder sister, whose home but for him would have been an asylum, mourning with a fearful yearning the days of her enforced absence, and welcoming with a childlike joy the happy day of her return.

Let those who would study the noble art of living together, make themselves acquainted with these two. Here is a proof that even a man can be absolutely unselfish, and that even a sister may fill a life with romance.

But I could point, not in books alone, to fine examples of the surviving family, when children long grown-up still live, a few of them, together. There are, for instance, those two brothers and their sister, in all of whom are certain marks of

advancing years, streaks of grey in the hair, and the pucker of wrinkles in the cheek. But I know no one who gives me more freely the sense of youth, and the sweet aroma of a half-vanished gaiety. She is still their pet; for the thought is always strong in their blood of the time when they took her on their knee, or tossed her to the ceiling. And when tradesmen have been trying her, or servants have been rude, — though that is a rare occurrence, — they are up in arms at once. They appear to be taking off their coats and rolling up their sleeves, as they did a matter of thirty years ago, when those great lubbers of the village school seized her doll and stripped it before her weeping eyes. Nor can I ever watch them as they watch her talking, without a feeling that they are referring to me — they are

both silent men — to ask if I don't think her clever, and pretty, and charming. And, candidly, I do. Her treatment of them is very motherly, — she assumed the motherly ways at the age of sixteen, when they were twenty-six and thirty respectively, and they were all left motherless. But what sat almost ludicrously on the young face of the girl sits very becomingly on the chastened face of the woman. And small as she is, she can take either or both of these big men to her heart, if occasion comes.

But nothing do I like better than the way in which the two brothers treat one another. There is no effusion. They call each other Tom and Dick in their most demonstrative moments. But then, "Tom." means a great deal to Dick, and, if possible, "Dick" means even more to Tom.

For "Tom" in that little household signifies the man who, years ago, formed, or rescued the business, when the father died, prepared a place for Dick, and sent the sister to a finishing school as if he were a rich man. "Tom" also means a person who once loved a girl with all his heart, and had to choose whether he should keep his sister at school, or tell his love and marry. And he chose, — nor did the sister and brother know till some years later. And "Dick" has a meaning of its own. It signifies a bright, thoughtless boy, who went wrong and missed his opportunity, and would have been dying at the other end of the world, but that *she* wrote to him, mother and sister and love in one; and Tom left his business and went after him, and explained in his blunt way — "Now look you here, Dick, Sis and I simply

can't live without you, — that 's the long and short of it. Will you come back to us, Dick?" And he came.

Into the details of that household I do not feel at liberty to enter. For, to say truth, there is a kind of sanctity about the place which forbids inquiry. And if I suspected that they would ever see this page I should not have said as much as I have. I almost regret saying so much, for when they hear that there is a book on this subject, I fear they will purchase a copy. For I have heard them all say in their own way that they consider the art of living together so important a branch of education that they never miss any opportunity of getting any light upon it. "In fact," said one of them, "we have all three made it a matter of daily study for twenty years and more."

But perhaps the most notable achievements in this kind have been obtained by maiden ladies, like those immortal sisters in Cranford. For in a country of streaming emigration like ours, it chances that a large number of women live far into old age as pairs or triplets of sisters. And the way in which a noble life can be maintained and nurtured, when the golden dreams of youth are forever passed, and the fingers of romance begin to lay hold only of eternity, is a study to gladden the heart. Happily it is a study accessible to all. I only wish my friend Sorella would write the concluding paragraph of this chapter, and tell the world how she and her two sisters have managed to make their home what it is. They have small means; and I gather from such observation of their rooms as my interest in their

conversation allows, that they are not of a specially cultured taste. The furniture and the pictures belong to the years 1840–50; forlorn horse-hair, knitted-wool reticulated anti-macassars, piano with a faded silk front behind a grille of curious wood-work, and pompous sideboards, in which they take a certain pride, — these objects will not account for the air of culture, the breath of peace, which makes it a joy to cross the threshold. But there is some notable living-together there. It is a triangular intimacy of an intricate kind which set me wondering for the first year of my acquaintance which was Sorella's favourite sister, and for the second year whether after all the two were not more attached to one another than to her. But long ago I have given up the curious and insoluble problem. The arrangement,

however, seems to be a sentry *à deux* set in perpetual watch over the peace, the well-being, the happiness of the third. Which will be the two on duty at any given time you may take to be a chance; but they change pickets with bewildering suddenness.

Sorella once told me that she had quarrelled with her sisters. Hot tears were in her eyes. I supposed that I had made a mistake, and the illusion of some years' growth was broken. Presently the two alienated sisters came gaily into the room. Sorella's tears again began to flow, and she refused to speak to them. I prepared to play the part of a peace-maker. "Surely, Sorella," I pleaded, "they could not mean it." "They did," she broke in with an abruptness I have never observed before; "they have sold all their jewellery and bought me a bath-chair, because

I cannot walk, and they have had it arranged so that they can draw it themselves, and save the cost of a man." And they did mean it, for they knelt down, one on each side of Sorella, and each took a hand — it was a wrinkled hand with large blue veins — and kissed it. They were perfectly impenitent, and every time I meet them out Sorella tells me, with a wealth of smiles and tearful glances at her gallant steeds, that the quarrel continues.

## II

### LIVING TOGETHER IN CIRCUMSTANCES OVER WHICH WE HAVE NO CONTROL

A MAN will not get far from that first experience of involuntary living together in the home of his birth before he finds that, though in other circumstances he must live with others, that was the most favourable condition he is likely to find. Alas, we do not realise it at the time! Our parents figure to us as irresponsible tyrants, our brothers and sisters as impertinent intruders. Beyond the home nest, we think, a better community can easily be constructed. But it is a delusion. Beyond the nest the boughs are bare. No one but a parent can build anything so comfortable as a nest. When that is deserted and ruined we still live

together with others, and on compulsion, but it is a sorry covey, perched, huddled, bustling, pecking, and flapping, side by side.

This kind of involuntary *συζῆν* is now to engage our consideration; for all of us at one time or another make some acquaintance with it. The instances are various. The one which I have known best was the life of Dons in an Oxford common-room. That was an instructive example of the way in which men, thrown together day after day through no choice or fault of their own, made a life of some sort or other in common. In earlier and hardier days the situation was relieved by a regular abundance of port. Recently it has been softened by the institution of married fellowships. When a few members of the common-room dine at home, with their wives as a rule, and only

with one another on occasion, they are very pleasant companions, and introduce a pretty talk, affording an argument for the married state which is powerful enough to empty common-rooms and transform colleges.

Another example of enforced living together is in the workhouse, where a sorrowful proportion of English men and women have to end their experience of a common life on earth, and practise a prelude of the common life in heaven. And as most of us are never raised above the possibility of such a conclusion, this alone should give zeal to our study of the art.

But between these extremes come innumerable grades. Men live together in messes, in boarding-houses, in great business establishments as masters and servants, in hotels, on board ship, for longer or shorter

periods. There is no opportunity of choosing the company. We are there on a kind of compulsion, and we have to take our fellows as we find them. We are not responsible for their character or behaviour; but we are for our own. We all are under an obligation that if failure, rupture, or irritation come, it shall not be chargeable on us. Others may be ill to live with, but we must not be. Here, therefore, comes the strongest reason for mastering the principles on which men can live well together. And though the cases seem too varied and peculiar to admit of a common treatment, it is possible to bring them all within two laws of practical conduct: The Law of Caution and the Law of Kindness. I will not venture to assert that these cover the whole ground. But they are indispensable. And

if the one savours of worldly prudence and the other of Christian charity, yet are they both necessary; for it is a mixed condition in which we find ourselves here. Unless we bring the life of angels into it, God knows we make of it a bungling business; but if we think it can be itself a life of angels we mistake, and may make ugly blunders. The Law of Kindness is good, but it is not enough to produce successful living together. The Law of Caution sounds cold and calculating; but for the compulsory society of which we are now thinking, it is often as necessary as kindness itself. Indeed, the lamentable breaches and the irreparable wrecks sometimes occur where there is no defect in the tides of good feeling, but these tides come rushing, swirling, foaming, and breaking over reefs which make peril-

ous havens. The Law of Kindness, as a Christian grace, has been plentifully illustrated and taught from pulpits; but the people in the pews are often making a failure of their life, though with good intentions, because the Law of Caution is not considered so suitable to the pulpit.

Now, the Law of Caution is briefly this: Every human being demands a careful study, if you will live with him, giving no offence and taking none. A mariner in approaching a Pacific island is always in peril unless he has an accurate chart. His ship may ground upon the coral reef, which comes up to within a few feet of the sea's surface. Only if he knows his bearings well can he pass safely within the atoll, and ride unhurt by the breakers and the surf. And

> We, in this sea of life enisled,

are all curious and camstrairy creatures unless we are understood. We will let one ship come very sweetly within our borders to the leeward, and with equal readiness we will dash another coming to windward on our rocks.

When you find yourself obliged to live with any person, man or woman, you should lose no time in taking careful soundings, and marking the chart. It is necessary to go cautiously, or you may not survive to complete your observations. No good can come of it unless you know the coast line pretty well. As a picturesque object in the Southern sea, with fronds of palm, and volcanic mountains that gleam purple and gold in the glory of sunset or the clearing of rain, this individual may be surveyed with a wide berth and enjoyed. But to live together

is another matter. It involves coasting round, riding at anchor, occasionally landing. An unseen shoal may be as fatal as a threatening jut of pointed rock.

This chart-drawing of a person with whom you have to live is not without its interest, its surprises, its delights. Every human character is an anomaly. The simplest of us contains many elements of the unexpected. There was Iracundus, for instance, with whom I lived very peaceably for several years. A better fellow in his way never breathed. But on every side of the compass there was a stiff reef, on which the seas hissed even in calm weather. Within the reefs he was quiet enough, except when a volcano opened. It was impossible to get over the reefs. It was always a question of delicately steering round them. Gradually

my chart marked accurately the safe inlets, but never to the last could I understand the reefs themselves. He would bear composedly enough an argument on highly debatable questions; but touch upon some indifferent matters of taste, or social carriage, or conventional honour, and you might be on the reefs and shipwrecked in a moment. There was a slight dry cough or clearing of the throat, a flicker of the eyes, and a sour pursing of the lips, which I learnt to know as danger signals, and to incontinently steer in another direction before worse things happened.

In most of us — so curiously are we constructed — our foibles cause more trouble than our most cherished principles. We can listen in calmness to an assault on our convictions long before we can bear what is in our opinion an impropriety.

But to return to Iracundus, I discovered that the infirmity of temper, which at first was a defect, had its uses for protection, and enabled a fine heart to develop in reticence and security. Frequently I reflected with wonder on the blundering approaches of others, who bore down on him full sail, crashed on the reefs, and retired cursing their own fate and him. They gave a false report of him; they had no idea of the genuine peace which girdled the inner shore, nor of the tropical fruit which enriched the mountain sides and the breezy plateaus. I take no credit to myself for making the discovery; it was made chiefly in self-preservation. But I would warn any one who is compelled to live with my friend, that without the chart there is no chance of peace; with the chart there may be peace with honour. I am

afraid I have mislaid the one I made myself, or I would offer it to any of my readers who is thrown into close quarters with Iracundus.

With every person some topics are dangerous, and should be avoided, for few people are without a streak of monomania. In the chart these should be as quickly as possible marked. Strange to say, religion, which should be the bond of peace, is frequently one of the dangerous topics. Perhaps this explains why we can seldom deal wisely in religious matters with those under our own roof. I have known pious persons, rich in good works outside the home, who yet drive those with whom they live into various stages of indignation, revolt, and unbelief, by their well-meant homilies. Generally speaking, our religion is best shown by words to strangers and

chance acquaintance, but by our lives to those who are always with us. If we live aright in the home, our words are unnecessary; if not, they are hurtful. When John Eliot was an usher in Thomas Hooker's school at Little Baddon, he does not tell us that Hooker talked to him, but he says: "Here *the Lord* said unto my dead soul — Live! And through the grace of Christ I do live, and I shall live forever. When I came to this blessed family I then saw, and never before, the power of godliness in its lively vigour and efficacy."[1] And in the same way a Chinaman came from Ningpo to seek Christian baptism, saying, when the missionary asked how he had heard the Gospel, "I have not heard the Gospel, but I have seen it,"

[1] See Dr. Brown's "Pilgrim Fathers of New England," p. 320.

because there had been in his city an opium-smoker of bad life and violent temper who had been entirely transformed by Christ.

It is the streak of monomania in people that makes it wise for us to humour them. Why irritate and excite when a little caution may keep the monomaniac within the ordinary bounds? No one is fit to live with others who cannot command some faculty in such humouring.

Sir Thomas More was one day meditating on his house-top, when a maniac presented himself, and announced his intention of throwing More over the parapet. "Very well," replied More, with perfect equanimity, "but shall we prolong the sport a little? Let us first throw over the dog, and see how he takes it." The lunatic agreed, went down to pick up the animal, and Sir

Thomas was able to bolt the door against further annoyance.

"Let us first throw over the dog" — it is an admirable rule. A slight sacrifice will soothe and divert impracticable tempers. It is not necessary to resent every affront, or we may live a life like the Three Musketeers, in perpetual broils. We are not called on to accept every challenge. Let people "swear awa' a little," as the good Scotchman said; and then we can speak to them quietly when they have done — on another subject.

We need not give offensive names, or tell the people under the roof with us that they are monomaniacs. But here is the fact; each person is so far by himself and peculiar that he demands study as a *solitary instance*. The shoals and shallows, the reefs and the inlets, the points

of danger, and the clear water, must all be carefully mapped and constantly remembered, if you are to live with him peacefully and happily. And this is the Law of Caution, without which all forms of involuntary συζῆν will be sullen or stormy.

But let no man think that the Law of Caution will suffice. Unless the Law of Kindness bears an equal sway, the result will be at the best but a putrid calm. To speak of this second law is a delight. "The Law of Kindness is on her tongue," that may be counted one of the large utterances of the Old Testament Scripture. It is in the grand manner. It affects us even more than the statement that the Law of the Stone Tables was given on Sinai. The word is the same in the two cases; the most sacred word of all

to Jewish ears after the divine unutterable Name. The *Tôrah,* that is, the Law, is the subject of Psalm cxix., and the cherished treasure of a race for now three thousand years or more. But is not the "Tôrah of Kindness" larger and lovelier even than this? Is there not reason to think that the "Tôrah of Kindness" not only came down from heaven, like the Tables of Stone, but actually remains in heaven as the presiding principle of all that blissful society?

And when it is said that the Law of Kindness is on the tongue of the virtuous woman, let it be understood that the law cannot be on the tongue unless it is in the heart. For kind speeches from a false heart, which are all the kindness that can be met with in many conventional and world-poisoned lives, are the most cruel

contradiction of that sweet law. Kindness without sincerity is only a sweetened unkindness, a draught not less bitter because it is conveyed in a palatable medium.

Now the Tôrah of Kindness is delivered in two tables, though there may be more or less than ten commandments in it: that is a point undetermined.

The one table contains certain prohibitions, and its tenor is, Thou shalt not be unkind. But the second table is all positive, and runs throughout, Thou shalt be kind. It would be a poor thing to master the first and leave the second, but it is a fitful and faulty method to master the second and to neglect the first. For of all people to live with I think I like least, my acquaintance Bilinguis. One day she overpowers me with deeds of kindness until I am

ashamed that I ever cherished an angry thought towards her, and the next day she serves me a turn which makes me grind my teeth. Her idea seems to be that she can atone for unkind deeds by kind ones. She goes very straitly by the second table, but does not know the first. On the whole, I much prefer even my friend Frigida, though her thought has a touch of the poles in it, who told me that to avoid insincerity she always endeavoured, when she felt cordial to her friends, to understate her affection, and when she felt chill to them, to warm it up to some tepidity, so that her general conduct should be equable. I remember when she explained this principle of avoiding insincerity that it struck me as an odd application of *similia similibus curantur.* Avoid great insincerity, by being always slightly

insincere, seemed to be the notion. But how it worked I cannot say, for I never lived with Frigida for more than a day or two at a time, and then she certainly managed to keep her feelings within very moderate limits of temperature.

The surer method, however, is to give an equal weight to the two tables. To glance at table one: It will require much self-control to avoid unkindness towards those with whom we live, for an obvious reason. We are like floes of ice on a Canadian river, grinding and crashing against each other, by the mere force of the tide. If you give yourself free play in any house, you will be crushing and grinding against some one almost at once, without knowing it. That was a beautiful resolution of Sir Walter Scott, piously recorded in his journal — and let me observe that

I would choose Sir Walter of all men to live with, and place second to him the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table — that when he was in a state of depression he would labour hard to conceal it from all the rest in the house, because, as he thought, it was bad enough for him to bear it without inflicting it on others. That is the principle of all the first table. You must keep your own unruly personality well in hand, that it may not at any point go plunging and colliding against those around you. Your opinions need not be expressed if they wound, unless there is a practical question at issue. Your sufferings are to be borne, not to be paraded. "One topic," as Emerson says, "is peremptorily forbidden to all rational mortals, — namely, their distempers. If you have not slept, or if you have slept, or if you have

the headache, or leprosy, or thunderstroke, I beseech you by all the angels to hold your peace and not pollute the morning. Come into the azure, and love the day." Consider what bubbling fountains of discomfort are let loose in the house by the man who frets and wails over his troubles. "I would rather have all the rest in the house ill than you," says his distracted wife. "And so would I," replies the raging brute. Keep yourself well in leash, and scrupulously watch that none of your actions or words cause annoyance or discomfort to any one in the house, — that is the idea of the multiplied commandments in the first table.

But the second table goes farther. It is well to exercise oneself in constant acts and words of positive kindness to all with whom you live. And the first commandment in this table

of the law is, "Without waiting for opportunities of great kindness, thou shalt set about little kindnesses forthwith." The value of kind deeds is out of all proportion to their cost. You pay a few coppers for the purchase — a magic change occurs — to the recipient they are worth gold.

I have known some people — men as well as women — happily ingenious in these small services of life, and the house in which they live has always a favourable aspect towards the sun. They use their brains in doing a kindness. They have received their commission from duty. They act in a firm and settled course. Though their alms are in secret, they are never in the dark, for they shed a light of their own. They give little presents which have an exaggerated attraction, because they are just what you want. They say the

right word — just what every one would say — only they say it at the right time, so that the apple of gold gleams in a basket of silver. They have a promptness of manner which forestalls your comfort and helps you without any burdensome reminder that the help is given.

Watching these genial and attractive people, I have often fallen into a despair about myself, for all this seems a natural gift, like music or poetry. But I have some reason to think that it is not so natural either, but toilsomely acquired in the accustomed places, — namely, the oratory at the foot of the Cross, and the cave under the hilltop of Duty.

And, therefore, inscribed on the second table, among and above the commandments, is the imperishable ode: —

I myself commend
Unto Thy guidance from this hour;
Oh, let my weakness have an end!
Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice;
The confidence of reason give;
And in the light of truth Thy bondman let me live!

## III

### LIVING TOGETHER AS HUSBAND AND WIFE

WHEN we pass over into those examples of living together in which the choice lies within our power, at least at the beginning, we are at once confronted with the most momentous fact of marriage. Mr. Hardy has shown that one can live happy though married; and for that word many have thanked him. He has also given directions how to do it. But it is a large theme, and requires much to be said on it by those who are not married; in some things the married are tongue-tied. I intend, however, to begin under the shelter of the church historian Sozomen, who of all writers has the greatest admiration of the ascetic or anchorite life.

"Ammon the Egyptian embraced philosophy," which means in Sozomen's lips the principles of monasticism. "It is said that he was compelled to marry by his family. But when the bridegroom was leading home the bride he said to her, 'O woman, our marriage has indeed taken place, but it is not consummated;' and then he showed her from the scriptures that it is good to remain a virgin, and entreated that they might live apart. She was convinced by his arguments, but was much distressed by the thought of being separated from him; and therefore he lived with her, but apart, for eighteen years, during which he did not neglect the monastic exercises. At the end of this period, the woman, whose emulation had been strongly excited by his virtues, became convinced that it was not just that such

a man should, on her account, live in the domestic sphere; and she considered that it was necessary that each should, for the sake of philosophy, live apart from the other. The husband, therefore, took his departure, after having thanked God for the counsel of his wife, and said to her: 'Do thou retain this house; I will make another for myself.' He retired to a desert place, south of the Mareotic Lake, between Scitis and the mountain called Nitria: and here, during two and twenty years, he devoted himself to philosophy, and visited his wife twice a year."[1]

Now I would not presume to say that this was the happiest married life conceivable, but it was happier than some I have known. I gather that Ammon and his wife learned to

[1] Sozomen, Ecclesiastical History, Book I. c. xiv.

respect, and even to love one another. I picture to myself those eighteen years as a stern but upward-tending discipline. And I find much delight in imagining that half-yearly visit of the lonely man from the Mareotic Lake to his unmarried wife. "How fares thy soul?" would be the mutual inquiry. And on the whole the answer would be: "Well." For it appears that on one occasion some wicked people brought him their son, who had been bitten by a mad dog to be healed, and he said, "Your son does not require my interposition; restore to your masters the ox you have stolen, and he will be healed." The ox was restored; and the boy was cured. That surely was excellent philosophy. And when Ammon died, Antony saw his spirit ascending into heaven and surrounded by heavenly beings singing hymns.

And though it did not fall to the task of Sozomen to record it, I conjecture that the last conversation of Ammon and his wife was of this sort:—

"Tell me, Ammon, since thou art now far advanced in philosophy, how comes it to pass that I, a childless and solitary woman, have much inward joy, even more than the mother of children, and find thy visits, though at so long an interval, a refreshment to my soul such as other women do not get from the continual society of their husbands."

"My wife," he answers, "for now will I give thee that name, since thou hast earned it, and we are passing into a region where there is no marrying or giving in marriage, the way of the Desert is counted hard, but it is not so hard as the way of the world. We agreed from the begin-

ning that our life should be settled on duty and the will of God, which are the same thing. The greater part of men settle it on pleasure."

"Yet it is a good thing," says she, "to see the joy of the bridegroom and the bride, and to gather the little ones about your knee. Surely that is duty, and that is the will of God."

"Wife, it is a good thing for those to whom God gives it. To different men there are different gifts. And so the divine Master taught us in His Gospel (Matt. xix. 12). But while we are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (2 Tim. iii. 4), we stand in the way of death and under the curse of the last days. And if, dear heart, peace and joy have come to thee in spite of thy deprivation, as indeed they have come to me, it is because on that our wedding day we resolved to

seek, not our pleasure, but His will."

"Yet there is Agatha," she breaks in, "who has lived in her husband's love ever since our marriage day, and now her children rise up to call her blessed."

"It is true," answers Ammon, "for she too started with our purpose, but God led her by a different way. If Euergetes, her husband, had done as I did he had erred, and if Agatha had been subjected to your lot, she had greatly lost. But they sought only the glory of God, not their own delight, and God has given them some taste of Paradise even in this corrupt world. We sought only the glory of God — and He appointed to us here no taste, but much foretaste, of Paradise. So that I reckon they are no whit behind us, nor we behind them. We have equally desired to

be lovers of God rather than lovers of pleasure."

"Then dost thou think, Ammon, my husband, we shall live together in Paradise as we did those eighteen sorrowful-happy years?"

"I believe it. Hard has been the wooing. Toilsome has been the sleep of prayer. But our solitude with God has brought us together. The love that burns in our hearts to-day is a fire that has been kindled, not at the flickering flame of hearths which will soon be cold, but at the eternal altar."

"I, too, believe. It is the Lord; let Him do as seems good to Him. It has ever been His way to fill the hungry with good things, and to send the rich empty away" — and she bows her grey head and buries her face in her wrinkled hands.

I cannot help seeing Ammon arise,

kiss the patient brow of his wife, and hurry away. And not many days later the Mareotic waters glowed with the light of a coming, and over mount Nitria, from the sill of heaven, sped the chariot of God for the ascent of His beloved.

I have chosen, it may be, an extreme case. But this is the point. The only foundation of a successful life together, even as married people, is not, as poets have feigned, love, but duty. Love is the beautiful palace of delight which may tower up even to heaven, but duty is the rock on which it is built.

It is an impertinence to pry into the secrets between man and wife. Even the best married man would shrink from codifying the rules. But it is permissible, from a distant point of observation, to follow out the opposite tracks, — the one in which

the *inamorati*, unsupported by duty, hasten to their sorrowful end; the other, in which duty and devotion lead to heights of love. A great master, Leo Tolstoi, has marked out that first track in *Anna Karenina*. There is surely no more piercing lesson in modern fiction than that lovely and gifted and tender nature sliding down the hill of Duty, instead of climbing up, and reaching her impassioned death under the wheels of the locomotive. But it does not quite serve for the present purpose, because it offers the loophole, which Tolstoi, with his Russian standard of morals, hardly saw, that the union of Vronsky and Anna is illicit from the beginning. While the sorrowful truth is this, that the union may be perfectly regular and lawful, and yet the inward disaster may be complete, if husband and

wife think to live together simply for their mutual delight, without primary and constant thought of the eternal righteousness.

On the other hand, Mr. Zangwill has, in "The Children of the Ghetto," given us a permanently valuable illustration of the opposite track; where the aged Jewish couple, after years of living together, finally find each other out, and fall mutually in love. Yes, blessed is the way of Duty; when she has led us far along her upward and precipitous path, she turns suddenly round on us, and behold she is Love!

Now we are ready to speak of the two tracks, and to consider how those men and women have lived together who make of marriage a joyful and ennobling state; and how they have made shipwreck, whose failure has filled the world with a cynical con-

tempt for that relation which of all should be the best. That famous advice to those about to marry, "Don't," has not, we may be sure, deterred a single person who was set upon the business; while the easy sneer at the misfortunes of those who have married unwisely, or ruined their opportunities by heedless blunders, has done mischief enough. We do not allow derision of the sacred tie which binds parents and children together. Even the license of the stage does not tolerate contempt of parental feeling, or suffer filial irreverence to go unscathed. There is no laughter over the thanklessness of Goneril and Regan, but only sustained indignation. There is no significant smile at the heroical fondness of Cordelia, but only tears of sympathy and admiration. And if we were wise, we should suppress all

the lowering jests, the sneers, and the innuendoes, which are directed against the relation of husband and wife. Or, better still, we should make that relation so charming that it wins respect, so lovely that even the most careless beholder is disposed to love. In matters of married life we are as yet barely civilized; and only in rare and noticeable instances are we Christian. It is said that in Catholic countries, like France and Italy, there is hardly a prejudice in favour of a pure and permanent union between man and wife, based on duty, fidelity, and carefully cultivated love. It is said that in Germany the home is generally built on the intellectual subordination of the wife, who discharges her task as *haus-frau*, and becomes the mother of the Germans —as we know them, but does not aspire to any closer relation with her

husband than these functions imply. In America, man and wife live together with great mutual respect, maintained by the possibility of easy divorce. And next to the Christian method, that which prevails in America seems to be as good as the world has yet found. But the Christian method is decidedly better. And in England, if anywhere, that must be grasped and applied.

The advice, therefore, which should be offered to those about to marry is, not "Don't," which is a jest and a misplaced one; but "Do, and take care you know what it means, and learn how to carry out the sacred covenant in the Christian way." Now here is advice which we need not despair of giving or receiving. And if it be impertinent to offer advice to elder people, there may be some young and ingenuous

souls who will accept a word of disinterested counsel, and at least make some attempt to test its soundness.

Here, then, we begin. Love is not enough for living together happily as man and wife, at any rate in the sense that love is usually understood in the days preceding the honeymoon. For the simple truth is, love is a delicate plant, which has to be cultivated and to grow; it is not a ready-made and infrangible chain of golden links. You may have a love as passionate, and as patient of death, as Romeo's and Juliet's; and if death throws his bridal veil over you both, you may pass into the unseen, an apparent proof that love is stronger than death. But love is not necessarily stronger than life. You may live and grow apart, though death would only have united you.

Let us suppose that Romeo and

Juliet had survived, and had carried out their purpose of living together. It is a daring thought, and I doubt Shakespeare would not like it. But alack-a-day, I have seen Romeo and Juliet living together, and they have made a sorry business of it. For, to begin with, a passionate love cannot by the very nature of our emotional faculties be retained at full tension always, and what is to happen, when for the moment the harp must be unstrung? Unless there is a less taut tie of mutual respect and common interests, it is like enough that the harp will not be restrung at all. Disillusioned, disgusted, chilled to the soul, you will leave the fine instrument under cover in the corner of your drawing-room, and seek for other music to fill the empty house.

But even if this danger is provided for, and the love is secure against

the fitfulness of those stormier emotions, and the dulness of their temporary exhaustion, it is still true that love in wedded life, as before, requires laborious and self-sacrificing culture. Woe betide the man who used courtesy as a mode of courting, and then put it aside with his court dress, not for home use but for state occasions. And what but the grace of God can save a married life in which a woman saves all her charms of manner, her wit, her accomplishments for the world which she would win, and not for the husband whom she thinks she has won?

If a man and a woman are to live together well, they must take the plant of love to the sunniest and securest place in their habitation. They must water it with tears of repentance, or tears of joy; they must jealously remove the destroy-

ing insects, and pluck off the dead leaves, that the living may take their place. And if they think they have any business in this life more pressing than the care and culture of the plant, they are undeserving of one another, and time's revenges will be swift and stern. Their love-vows will echo in their lives like perjuries; the sight of their love-letters in a forgotten drawer will affect them with shame and scorn; in the bitterness of their own disappointment they will charge God foolishly, and think that every plant of love has a worm at the root because they neglected theirs, and every married life is wretched because they did not deserve happiness.

A man must give his mind to a wife, and a wife must give her mind to a husband, as well as the heart, if they are to make a success of it.

"What do you mix with your colours to produce these wonderful effects?" asked a lady of Turner. "Brains, madam," was the reply. And certainly, if the picture of your married life is to be anything but a daub, you must mix brains with your pigments, an assiduous and considerate attention, a generous sharing of the best that is in you, an exercise of skill to use it all to the best advantage for one another. And if God gives you both some moderate amount of brains, and they are faithfully used, you may make of your union a very lovely picture, rich with the glow of Titian's palette, mystical with the magical transformations of Turner.

And because the picture which is thus produced is not visible, except by rare glimpses, to the eyes of men; because it is only by an accident that

the world looks into the love which bound Kingsley to his wife, or into the rapture of those wedded poets, —

> O lyric Love, half angel and half bird,
> And all a wonder and a wild desire —

I suppose these transcendent combinations of faithful human souls are subjects for the happy contemplation of God, and are changed from glory to glory, until they take their place in that palace of delight where He keeps those gems and curios, intaglios, pictures, statues, and books, which He has recovered out of the dust and confusion, the chaos and the débris of this unhappy world.

It is worth an effort then. And let us turn back for a moment to Mr. Zangwill's beautiful thought. No prudence or insight can prevent many marriages which at the start have but small promise of success. Do

what we will, hundreds of households must be formed with a skeleton in the cupboard revealed on the morrow of the wedding. There is little stability in human character. The shocks of change and the freaks of opinion, the attacks of disease, especially of mental disease, the unsuspected discoveries of the unfolding heart, the impertinence of friends, the malice of enemies, the cleavages of religious conviction, the unforeseen antagonisms of taste, the irruption of children, the intrusion of distressed relatives, the sheer perversity of things, will, beyond all control of human wit and wisdom, affect and possibly mar even marriages that promised well. These two are one; under the same roof they must live; at the same board they must eat. They find they did not love; it was all a sorrowful mis-

take. Now is the time for the strong girding of duty. They intended delight, but delight is not to be. Their love was to be the rock on which they should stand together, and it seems to have crumbled under their feet. But their hearts are brave. They will face the difficult and uncongenial, trusting in God. They will live together; but principally they will live with God.

*He* cultivates a scrupulous kindness, and makes a larger allowance for the visible faults than he would, if there were the strong chain of love to rely on. *She*, suppressing herself, brings all her powers to build the home, to deck it with beauty, to grace it with thought and feeling. She exercises a large compassion, and forgetting what *she* has missed, dwells exclusively on what *he* has failed to win, until her pity invests him with a healing robe.

It is a path of high renunciation. They tread it side by side, if not together. The chattering world is kept out, but God is let in. There are no murmurs to others, or even to Him; but there is much and eager prayer.

That is a fine and purging instance of living together. That some noble issue will be achieved stands in the very nature of the ordering and redeeming Love which presides over human life. It is perhaps safer not to anticipate the result. But it certainly lies within the possibility of things, that in some far-off day, perhaps when the light of the eternal world begins to shine palpably through into the chambers of this, they will, having patiently wooed, also win one another. Let them continue with that sublime hope. Let them understand that God must

have many ways of redressing the comfortless situations, which have been bravely accepted and made the occasions of dutiful surrender and self-sacrificing toil. If this is perhaps the hardest and most perilous condition of living together that one can conceive, it may also be more abundant in glory.

## IV

### LIVING TOGETHER IN OTHER CONDITIONS ACCORDING TO CHOICE

THERE remains only the consideration of those instances in which we are able to choose those with whom we would live, but do not or cannot choose the married state. It may seem that here the problem is perfectly simple, because if we do not like the arrangement we can alter it. There is small difficulty in moving from our boarding house to one a little higher up the street. If we find that a common household with friends proves disappointing, we can break up the establishment, and remain friends with a thicker wall

between us. But in this apparently perspicuous case there are some fine possibilities which fall to be considered. And especially there are these two: (1) A man may find himself thrown into a certain alliance of livelihood with others, by his own choice, and when the friction arises, from inertia or from pressure of duties, he may not be disposed to change. He therefore casts about to make the best of an uncomfortable but not intolerable situation. (2) A man may, from motives of large benevolence, like Dr. Johnson, fill up his household with homeless and awkward people whom nobody wants. And here comes in the noblest opportunity of realising the art of living together. Under no compulsion of birth or worldly necessity, of his own free choice, a Samuel Johnson takes to live with him people who can

yield him no delight, because he thinks he may yield them delight. Hitherto our art has seemed to furnish openings for quiet and passive endurance and manful duties; here it looks out upon heroism.

First, then, I propose to speak of that condition in which one is induced from one motive or another to suffer the society of distasteful persons. The feeling that it might be avoided will give dignity and purpose to forbearance. The greatest gains of the spirit are certainly won when the soul goes out armed cap-à-pie to seek adventures, after the manner of Sir Nigel Loring, not choosing the easier and less perilous path, but finding a stir and a rapture in the thought of a knight-errantry. Now, it has to be considered that luxurious surroundings are always enervating. Downy pillows, cur-

tained windows, dainty fare, abundant books and pictures, — a man who values his soul will be very loth to yield to these delights. Strenuous kings, like Marcus Aurelius, or Frederick the Great, have preferred the bare room and the truckle-bed, the plainest food, scant fire and clothing, and the perpetual *askesis* of the body, to that subtle degeneration of the character which excessive comfort entails. This is not a subject for immediate admiration, or an argument of complete self-sacrifice. It only implies that good and fibrous souls find smaller delight in the things which please common men than in their own strenuousness and maintained excellence. A man may well be an ascetic, not to win the favour of God, or to move the wonder of his fellows, but simply to secure his own self-respect. And

I think I have detected in all noble spirits that I have known a great impatience of *easifulness*, the alert attitude of an equipped soldier, whose countenance suggests that the ring of the clarion is in his ear.

But there is nothing so luxurious as a constant congeniality of companionship. What is an arm-chair, or a cosy fireside, or a well-spread table compared with souls that scintillate and respond at your touch, the quick comprehension, the never varying harmony of spiritual kinship? For my own part, I would very willingly live in the poorhouse if I might be with half-a-dozen selected friends. That would be to me a consummation of luxury.

A man, therefore, who is set on high things may very reasonably choose the discipline of a distasteful society in his own house, on the

same principle that St. Francis sprinkled ashes over the rich dishes when he dined with princes, or St. Hugh wore a tormenting hair-shirt next his skin.

But perhaps the virtue of such a choice will best appear if I narrate the experience of my whimsical friend Sardonicus. Nothing would annoy him more than to think that he was quoted "to point a moral," for that is a part in life which he eschews. On the other hand, he is very willing "to adorn a tale," and has sometimes seemed to me to live principally for that purpose. I find great difficulty in learning how he came to his present situation, for he has an ironical way which cuts short inquiries. But an odder state of life it would be difficult to imagine. He has no more endearing survival of a married state than his mother-

in-law, with whom he lives, nor any closer suggestion of paternal interest than several young persons who were his deceased wife's step-children. To add to the complication, during the wife's days the mother had acquired an establishment of her own, including a tyrannical coachman, whom she felt it her duty to retain. And for a time after his wife's death he had employed a sour housekeeper, whom he did not see his way to dismiss. He maintained a house therefore in which he had no authority except when bills fell due, in which the management was the subject of daily drawn engagements between his mother-in-law and his housekeeper, in which he had all the responsibilities of fatherhood without any of the affection of children, in which he could not so much as order his own

brougham without the sanction of his coachman.

Considering that Sardonicus is a prosperous man and has only himself to please, I have ventured now and again to express my wonder that he did not release himself from this incongruous household, and go into chambers, or take a shooting-box in the country, or abscond to the bush, or fall into a homicidal mania. But he will assure me that no arrangement could be more to his taste. And every one in the house is so well convinced of it that they feel they have done all that is required of them by simply living with him, crossing his will, and playing their part as thorns in his side. There is a housemaid in the establishment with a soft heart, and she is perpetually rendering him surreptitious services. But she is the only one in the

house to whom he is not uniformly kind.

While this family remained unbroken I could never get Sardonicus to enter into the subject. But the sour coachman went away in a huff because he had been kept waiting half an hour on a cold night; and I called to congratulate my friend upon this happy deliverance. But I found him very despondent, and in his distress quite communicative. He assured me that he did not know how he would get on without Snarler, to whom he owed an incalculable debt. "The fact is," said he, "I am naturally a selfish and irritable brute. Nothing I could ever do seemed to keep under these unamiable sides of my character. But, thanks to the mother-in-law and the step-children, I have made some progress against the selfishness. By never being con-

sidered in my own house I am learning never to consider myself. But they are all of them very smooth-spoken, and frustrate my purposes with lavish show of affection. Nor is any of them in the least surly or ill-tempered; so that I have never got from the man opportunity of conquering my irritability. But Snarler gave me this every day, and I thought I was getting on, when here comes the fellow's notice to leave, and I am as irritable at it as if he had never done me any of these daily services."

I looked up to see if Sardonicus was serious. But he had fallen into a taciturn fit, and I glanced round the room unobserved. This was his "snuggery." It was in the back and sunless part of the house, and had not even a fire-grate. There was a linoleum floorcloth, and a stiff-

backed, wooden-seated chair. The books were fixed up in some extemporised shelves. The writing table was one which his mother-in-law had discarded because the leg was broken; and two or three muddy bicycles obstructed movement; the big step-sons could find no other place to keep them in. As the house is large and comfortable, and I know that even the housekeeper's room is a model of warmth and comfort, I could only suppose that this arrangement was made, like everything else, because Sardonicus liked it.

It is strange that so few men seem to consider in selecting those with whom they will live what will be good for them. And probably many fine points of character are lost because we seek rather the pleasant than the useful in these interior

arrangements of life. But though my friend Sardonicus is an enigma to me, he has at least shown that a character may grow, and mellow, and be beautified by a hearty acceptance of uncongenial circumstances; while he has set me wondering what need there was in mediæval times to seek a monastery for discipline. Evidently ordinary men were in those days pleasanter to live with. Now it is no longer necessary to become a Flagellant, or a Cistercian. All the means of spiritual exercise in patience, courtesy, kindness, and the service of God, are to be found in almost any household where your lot may be cast. And some people I have seen who have "purchased a good degree," without any suggestion of sacrifice which meets the outer world. For I have known enough of their homes to recognise that the smile on their face

which does not fade is in itself the halo which gleams about a crown of thorns.

But now we pass to that other condition of which Dr. Johnson gave us the beautiful example. Nor is it altogether different from the spirit of Sardonicus. But it is a gain, no doubt, to step into the open, and to do good deeds avowedly for Christ's sake. For the most part men have chosen their *convivæ* (that is the concise Latin word for "those with whom we live") so exclusively for delight and not for duty, that we have derived from *convivæ* merely the idea of conviviality, or that kind of festive companionship which, from the nature of the case, can only be occasional. But it is a beautiful notion to regulate our conviviality on Christ's principles, and so to make our *convivæ* among publicans

and sinners, *i.e.*, among persons whom others do not court or whom we may, by consorting with them, save.

I remember no more cheerful board or happier home than one which for a night I was permitted to share some time ago. The father overflowed with good humour and the mother beamed with quiet hospitality; two daughters shed a light of love and joy over the whole, and welcomed a guest with the air of those who value the things which they offer for his acceptance.

Some chord of sympathy was touched between me and my host, and he confided to me that these beloved girls were his daughters only by adoption. He had rescued them — they were not sisters — as orphans from a position of want and danger,

and had taken them to his house, and to his heart, making his wife their mother and himself their father. No more successful arrangement could be conceived. Before I understood the situation I was aware of a singular joy pervading the house. Afterwards I noted that it came from the invisible Lord who spread His hands in the home and daily said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my little ones ye have done it unto me."

Now, all the graver difficulties of living together disappear when the relation is thus established on the footing of duty and the charity of God. No family will be so secure against change, or less saddened with disappointments. For here we touch in its simplest and clearest form the principle which has been flickering before our eyes all the time, that

duty, exalted and Christly duty, is the only sure motive of a *συζῆν*, which is also to be an *εὖ ζῆν*. Would you be happy, you who hold in your hands the power of choosing those with whom you would live, you who have houses and money and lands, but no children or relatives of your own to people the houses, to utilise the money, to justify the lands? Then go out into the highways and hedges; take to your board the unfed, cover the unclothed, make a home for the homeless. Visit the fatherless in the orphanages and the workhouses, to make yourself a father to one or another of them. Commit your wealthy friends to Heaven with fervent prayers that they may sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but make your own friends of those who need you, those who but for you will be friendless. That

little household of sour and querulous people, who showed little gratitude and often embittered his days, was a more lasting monument to Johnson than the great dictionary. Dr. Murray has superseded the dictionary, all but the noble and pathetic preface. But no one has superseded, if some have surpassed, that exquisite household. The George Müllers, the Barnardos, the Von Bodelschwinghs, the Mrs. Guineveres, have all walked in the steps of the great lexicographer. And no one has found a terser expression of the Christian life than this, *Conviva tuus sit quem adjuvare possis.*

And now with this thought of the art of living together we may pass down our streets and high roads, and glance over the park palings, conjecturing what goes on in the grand

old house embowered in the trees; and we can reflect that a matter of much pith and moment is being settled behind each of these closed doors, unbetrayed by windows or sounds. Every house, even an empty one, has a certain sanctity and a certain symbolism in it. While man lives alone, a hole in the rock will serve him. But when he builds a hut, wigwam, house, or palace, it is with a view of living together. I have therefore an uneasy feeling when I see a dwelling dismantled and pulled down. It has been the mould of human souls in a sense almost as literal as human bodies are. The art of living together has its importance because it is a preparation for the endless feast, the hospitality and community in the house not made with hands. A man will be strangely unprepared

for heaven if he has been a solitary on earth. He will not know the gracious and courteous manners of the place. Still less prepared will he be who has lived with others on earth only to exasperate his own faults and theirs, growing more churlish, more irritable, more selfish every year.

I persuade myself that all our life is a preparation for the social life of heaven, and all our houses are built in some faint remembrance of that large and gleaming house of God. One is prepared for good society when one is fit to join with angels and archangels. The urbanity of human intercourse, the pleasantness of wit and repartee, the charm of well-stored minds, and the discursive treatment of the things that interest men, the delicate consideration for one another, the habit of rendering

unobserved services, or giving unexpected presents, the large sympathies, the exuberant affections, the mirth, the pathos, the solemnity, which we acquire by living properly together here, are as truly a preparation for that state in which we shall live

> Enjoying each the other's good,

as the exercises of prayer and fasting, and reading, which are more generally reckoned as religious.

There is an old and salutary Latin line,

> Tecum habita et noris quam sit tibi curta supellex,

which may perhaps be rendered,

> Dwell with thyself till thou art sure
> How slender is thy furniture.

But for a true and Christian philosophy of life it requires a pendant,

which has been in our minds through out these pages:

> But dwell with others till thou see
> How grand the common stock may be.

I therefore take leave of my courteous reader, on the understanding that, though we do not live together, we should get on very well if chance brought us into a *contubernium* for a campaign, and with the hope that we may make trial of such a communion in the larger mansions by and bye. I shall also ask his pardon for the very sketchy way in which so large a subject has been treated; for it may well chance that he is in a relation with fellow-creatures which has not been covered even by my laborious divisions, or met by any of these hurried hints.

And I shall close with a suggestion, which comes opportunely from one far wiser and better than I ever

hope to be, who says that the one sufficing secret for living together even under trying circumstances is to carry out the precept, "to know no man after the flesh." I could have wished my correspondent had been more explicit in the application. But I get a glimpse of a meaning, and of a beautiful one.

When we begin to see all things and all men in God, we find loveliness in all, very much as ugly objects look charming under the enlargement and flooding light of the microscope. The eye is purged, and the accidental relations established by the shifting atoms of humanity seem very temporary, while the spiritual values rise into an eternal significance.

Does my neighbour in the bunk as we cross the great seas roll against me, and fret me with his humours?

Well, after all we are neither of us quite ourselves in this stifling air, and on these heaving waves. Presently we shall reach the port, and, turning to each other on the quay, we shall remember or forget, hail a comrade in that uncomfortable neighbour, or blandly part from one who need never have annoyed, though he never could have pleased us.

Is my household all incongruous, with tempers, and tastes, and opinions, which no power on earth can harmonise? Ah! let me wait awhile. Let me know them all *not* after the flesh. Tiny atoms of the imperishable whole — sparks flying up from the central fire — we shall find our places by and bye, we shall be the better for this wearisome attrition, for the confusion and the crackling which made life sometimes difficult.

No, we will not know each other

after the flesh, but as the Schoolmen would have said, *sub specie eternitatis*. Break, beam of heaven, into our disordered dwellings, and merge our faint and meagre cross-lights in the broad and changeless day.

THE END